THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) State of Forest Report 1997 published by Forest Survey of India indicates a marginal decrease of 166 sq. km. in the forest cover of the State. Report also reveals that 1,062 sq.km. of dense forest has changed to open forest. However, the area under mangroves has increased by 16 sq.km.

(b) Although some incidents of poaching of rare and endangered species are reported by the state from time to time, there are no reports of any large scale poaching of such species.

(c) Major steps being taken by the Government for conservation of forest and wildlife are as under:

(i) Afforestiation programmes are being undertaken.

(ii) Guideliens have been issued to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degaraded forests through Joint Forest Management.

(iii) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate diversion of forest land.

(iv) A centrally sponsored scheme "Modern Forest Fire Control Methods" is being implemented to protect and conserve the forest from fire.

(v) Hunting of wild animals included in Schedules I to IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 has been banned.

(vi) Special measures for protection and conservation of tigers and elephants and their habitat are being implemented.

(vii) A network of 17 wildlife sanctuaries and 2 national parks covering area of 6677 sq.km. has been set up for conservaion of wild flora and fauna.

(viii) Raids are carried out by the wildlife authorities, whenever information of illegal trading in wildlife animals reaches them.

(ix) International Trade in Endangered Species of animals and articles made thereof is regulated under the provisions of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Hazardous environmental conditions in Indrapaastha and Rajghat Thermal Plants

1995. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indraprastha and Rajghat Thermal Power Plant workers are dangerously exposed to deadly fumes emitted by the plants and majority of the workers are suffering from respiratory disorders;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the number of workers in each of the power plants who died due to exposure to the deadly fumes during the last three years; and the number of workers suffering from respiratiory disorders in each of the plants; and

(c) the preventive measures taken by Government to improve the hazardous environmental conditions in these power plants?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Extent of air and noise pollution in Delhi

1996. SHRI JOYANTA ROY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be please to state:

(a) whether, of late, the extent of air and noise pollution has increased mainifold in the capital rendering Delhi as the most polluted city in the World:

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to tackle the alarming situation; and

(c) whether Government would like to enlist the active cooperation of the various voluntary organisations and NGOs in this regard and if so, whether the Government have formulated any scheme in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) There has been an increase in air noise pollution in Delhi during the last couple of years. According to the Report of UNEP-WHO on "Global Pollution and Health, 1988". Dehli ranks 4th most polluted city in terms of Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) amongst 41 cities and 27th in terms of Sulphur dioxide amongst 54 cities.

(b) The steps being taken for control of pollution in the Naional Capital Region are:

(i) The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority had been set up for the National Capital Region for protecting and improving the quality of the environment and preventing, controlling and abating environmental pollution.

(ii) An Action Plan for the control of Pollution in the National Capital Region has been prepared and is under implementation. The progress of the implementation is periodically monitored and overseen by the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authrity.

(iii) Monitoring of air quality by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) through 10 ambient air quality monitoring stations under the National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme. The data generated from the basis for the analysis of the quality of air in the different regions against the prescribed limits.

(iv) Effluent and emission standards for major industries have been notified and industries have been directed to comply with the prescribed standards.

(v) Emission norms have been progressively tightened for emissions from vehicles at the manufacturing stage. These came into effect in 1990 and made tighter in 1996. A much stricter emission norm will be introduced from 1.4.2000 for all categories of petrol and diesel vehicles.

(vi) The Government has drawn up a major programme for improvement of the quality of automotive fuels. Unleaded petrol was introduced in Delhi from 1st April, 1995 for the use of new 4-wheeler petrol vehicles fitted with catalytic converters introduced from this date. Low sulphur diesel of 0.25% has been introduced in Delhi from 15 August, 1997. Premixed fuel oil mixture is being supplied in the retail fuel outlets to prevent sale of loose low quality oils.

(vii) Introduction of cleaner fuels such as CNG for the in-use vehicles in order to reduce emissions.

(viii) The public transport system is proposed to be strengthened by inducting more buses into the DTC fleet.

(ix) More than 200 private petrol pumps and workshops have been authorised by the Department of Transport, Government of Delhi, for pollution checcking, tuning of polluting vehicles and issuance of Pollution Under Control Certificates. Pollution checking facilities are being increased.

(x) A system of synchronised signals and better traffic management has been introduced.

(xi) A number of polluting industries located in non-conforming areas in Delhi have been closed or relocated to conforming areas.

(xii) Ambient standards in respect of noise for different categories of areas (residential, commercial, industrial and silence zones) have been notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Accordingly, silence zones have been devised for the city of Delhi.

(xiii) Pressure horns have been banned under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and violations are being checked by the Traffic Police as per relevant law.

(xiv) Noise limits have been prescribed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for automobiles and domestic appliances at the manufacturing stage and are being monitored accordingly.

(xv) Electrostatic precipitators have been installed in three thermal power plants in Delhi, at Indraprastha, Rajghat and Badarpur to reduce the release of Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) into the atmosphere. Sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen are emitted through stacks of specified height to facilitate wider dispersal so that the ground level concentrations of these gaseous pollutants are kept controlled. Stack monitoring is done on a regular basis.

(c) The Action Plan for Delhi envisages participation of NGOs for control of pollution in Delhi. CPCB has enlisted the NGOs for the abatement of pollution. CPCB officials train them to analyse various parameters to check pollution. The NGOs are also provided published material at concessional rates. In addition, the Transport Department has launched public awareness campaign in Delhi to educate people about the statutory punitive provisions related to vehicular pollution, health hazards, and on the maintenance measures for control of pollution from vehicles.

Ratification of amendment to the Basel Ban

1997. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India, at the 4th Conference on trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste, held at Kuching, Malaysia, had indicated its plan to ratify the historic 1995 amendment to the "Basel ban" pending adoption of the list of hazardous wastes prepared by the technical working group;

(b) if so, whether the Organisation for Economic Cooperation of Developed Countries has been trying to scuttle or delay the ban; and

(c) the effective steps being taken to effectively pervent the exports of such wastes to India, indicating the actual exports of such wastes into India from various countries during 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) In the address delivered by India at the Fourth Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal held at Kuching, Malaysia from February 23-27, 1998, it was indicated that India is taking steps to ratify the amendments to the Basel Convention. The proposal to amend the Basel Convention to include the list of Wastes - List 'A' and List 'B' prepared by the Technical Working Group as Annex VIII and IX to the Convention, which defines hazardous wastes, was jointly presented by the European Union and Chile to the fourth Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention. Many European countries are part of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation of Developed Countries.

(c) As per rule 11 of the Hazardous Wastes (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989, imports of hazardous wastes from any country to India is not permitted for dumping and disposal. However, imports of such wastes may be allowed for processing or reuse as raw material after examining each case on merit. From April, 1995, import of hazardous wastes has been restricted to actual users with an import licence. *Vide* order dated 5.5.1997, the Supreme Court of India in a public interest litigation Writ Petition No. 657/95 - Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology versus Union of India and Others ordered that no authorization/permission should be given by any authority for the import which have already been banned by the Central Government or by any order made by any Court or any authority. Seven permissions for imports of hazardous wastes have been granted so far from 1989 till 1996. During 1998 two importers have been granted permission for negotiations with the exporters.